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March 10, 2003

Honorable Colin L. Powell  
Secretary of State  
2301 C Street  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Powell:

We urgently request a meeting with you this week on a critical national security matter. Specifically, we are concerned that the so-called "Powell Doctrine," which you authored, has not been followed in the Administration's planning for a war in Iraq and its aftermath.

For over a decade, the Powell Doctrine has served presidents of both parties as a guidepost in determining whether or not American Armed Forces should be committed to battle. As articulated in your 1992 article in Foreign Affairs magazine, the Powell Doctrine provides a prudent template for judging the acceptability of a proposed military action by the U.S. It poses several questions:

- Is a vital national security interest threatened?
- Do we have a clear attainable objective?
- Have the risks and costs been fully and frankly analyzed?
- Have all other non-violent policy means been fully exhausted?
- Is there a plausible exit strategy to avoid endless entanglement?
- Have the consequences of our action been fully considered.
- Is the action supported by the American people?
- Do we have genuine broad international support?

We have carefully reviewed the Administrations arguments for attacking Iraq and its portrait of U.S. involvement in the "post-war Iraq." We are puzzled because applying each question posed by your doctrine to the Administration's posture on Iraq leads to a negative answer.

responsible for 9/11 and are planning additional attacks on America. That is reportedly why many senior commanders in the Pentagon have been opposed to the campaign in off-the-record interviews with the press since last summer. One very high profile capture is an important success, but hardly ends the war on terrorism.

Second, our stated objective has been kaleidoscopic. It has shifted back and forth among disarmament, regime change, restoring U.N. credibility and, now, democratizing the entire Middle East. Is this classic example of "mission creep?" If the objective is more broadly to decrease threats to our national security, it is not clear whether an Iraq war would make us more secure, or less secure. There is the likely impact on terrorist recruitment, the diversion from our war on terror, and the fact that, as the CIA concluded, Saddam would be unlikely to use weapons of mass destruction, or give them to terrorists, unless he was faced with destruction and sought lethal revenge.

Third, a majority of Americans question the impending war. Polls showing support of 60-70% are misleading because those respondents were asked if they favored "military operations to remove Saddam," which sounds like an easy, painless prospect. When asked about the use of substantial American ground troops, the support falls below 50 percent, and when the prospect of U.S. casualties is added, support drops into the mid-forties. This is corroborated by the anti-war resolutions enacted by city councils of hundreds of American cities, including almost all of our largest cities, representing millions and millions of citizens.

Fourth, there is no broad, un-coerced support in the international community. Many nations fear the war would threaten their national security because it would inflame the Middle East and the Muslim world. Prior to the Administration's intense diplomatic pressure, not even Saddam's regional neighbors claimed he was an imminent threat to them. It is clear that, absent "reimbursements," important U.S. concessions on bilateral issues, and thinly veiled threats, there would be little enthusiasm for this venture within the international community. We may be seeing only the tip of the iceberg of such hidden, indirect costs of the war.

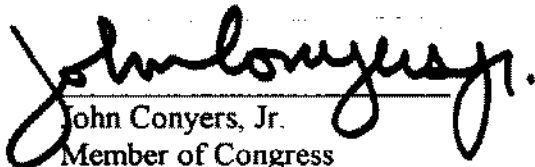
Fifth, there is no persuasive exit strategy. In your 1992 article, you defended the decision during Desert Storm not to proceed into Baghdad with a question pertinent today:

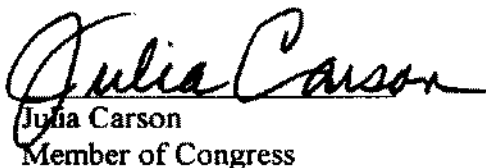
The Administration has now estimated the cost of war and only one year of U.S. peacekeeping and reconstruction efforts. But independent experts, including senior retired U.S. commanders, have urged that a five- to ten-year period of necessary U.S. peacekeeping, an annual expenditure of hundreds of billions of dollars, is more realistic. The Army Chief of Staff recently testified that hundreds of thousands of U.S. troops would have to stay for the initial post-war period. The alternative appears to be Iraq's rapid disintegration into civil war and further instability in the region if our exit is too swift. The lesson taught by Afghanistan is that our servicemen will be needed and will face mortal danger for a long time. And they will need the assistance of allied forces. That makes the lack of enthusiasm and genuine support for war among our allies even more troublesome.

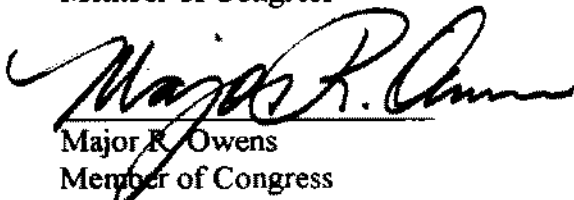
We realize that these questions also deal with concerns of the Defense Department, as well. Nonetheless, since you authored and have championed the Powell Doctrine, we would appreciate an opportunity to discuss with you, as soon as possible, the disparities between the Administration's plans for an Iraq war and the Powell Doctrine.

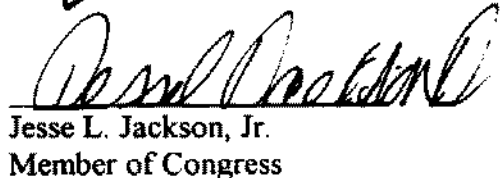
Please have your staff contact Representative Conyers office arrange a mutually convenient appointment as soon as possible.

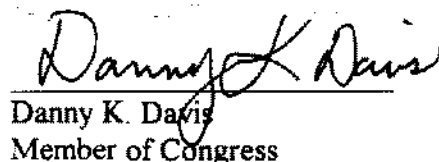
Respectfully,

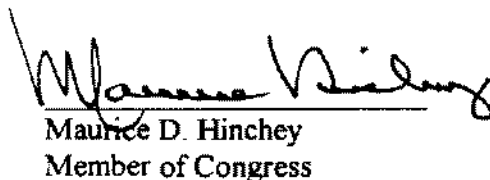
  
John Conyers, Jr.  
Member of Congress

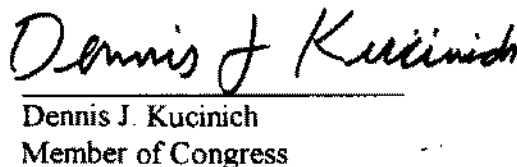
  
Julia Carson  
Member of Congress

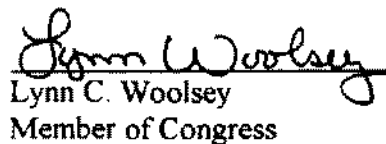
  
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